

COMMUNICATIONS AND STATEMENTS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

STATEMENT BY JOHN W. GARDNER

I am John W. Gardner of Washington, D.C. I submit this statement on "Uniform Relocation Assistance" as an individual and not as a representative of any organization. However, I draw upon my experience as the former Secretary of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, and my present responsibilities as chairman of the Urban Coalition.

The renewal and reconstruction of American cities is an essential part of the needed response to the urban crisis which now confronts this nation. Much of the vitality of our urban civilization is focused in our central cities. Although suburbs and new towns have an important place in urban development, the central core of metropolitan areas must be preserved and improved.

To improve cities inevitably requires a certain amount of tearing down as a prelude to reconstruction. This rebuilding process means that residential and business properties must be acquired and their occupants displaced. Families and single persons will have to move from their homes and businessmen from their establishments.

These persons are inconvenienced and some of them suffer considerable personal hardship to benefit the whole community. Because of this, there is a major public responsibility to assure that those who must relocate are treated with great care and generosity.

A wide variety of public programs cause displacement but the two activities which produce the most relocation are urban renewal and highways. In the cities, both seem to move a disproportionate number of poor and moderate income families and small businessmen. A major focus of urban renewal is the demolition of deteriorated housing, most of which is occupied by the poor, and within an urban renewal area many of the businessmen who must move have small operation, with modest net income. The interstate highway program, with most of the routes in the countryside completed or underway, is concentrating more and more on the routes in and near the heart of cities, that is, in those neighborhoods where low- and moderate-income families reside. Yet it is these families who already have the greatest difficulty finding adequate housing.

Over the past two decades there has been an increasing Federal concern about the relocation process. Unlike some of the construction programs of the nineteen-thirties, the urban redevelopment program, from its beginning in 1949, made provision for relocation payments, and the amounts of financial assistance and other services has been expanded in the intervening years. The highway program has had more modest provisions for relocation assistance, but at least it provides some aid to the persons who must move.

Nonetheless, when the Federal government itself acts as a developer in the construction of Federal facilities, it makes no relocation payments. Nor is assistance required under a number of the grant-in-aid programs. Moreover, the highway program provides less assistance than urban renewal, and these different benefit levels cause inequities among persons who are displaced. For example, on one side of the street families might be displaced by an urban renewal project and given financial assistance at one level while across the street other families are dislocated by a highway project and given lesser assistance. This is unjust to the displaced persons, and it is confusing to the general public.

Because of these problems, the Uniform Relocation Assistance Act, which is title VIII of S. 698, is highly desirable legislation. It will go a long way toward correcting the deficiencies in existing arrangements.

The proposed act is commendable because of its broad coverage. It requires for the first time that Federal agencies must make relocation payments and provide other assistance to displaced residents and businessmen. It extends this requirement to States acting as agents for a Federal public improvement project. It applies to federal assisted programs where States, political subdivisions, and